

Interview H0225: with Thubten Sangye [tib. thub bstan sangs rgyas], (India, 1981) : Part No. 2 of 2

Thubten Sangye was an important monk official in the Tibetan government with the rank of Khenjung. He was one of the Acting Trunyichemmo in Lhasa when the Dalai Lama went to Yadong (Tromo). He was an unusual official since he had spent several years in the Tibetan government's office in China (khendrönlosum [tib. mkhan mgron lo gsum]) during the Guomindang era and spoke fluent Chinese. In this interview, he discusses the interrogation of Reting Rimpoche which he attended.

Reting asked me [while he was held in prison], "Do you go to [visit] the Regent? I said, "in the past I have received dharma teachings, but now, except for official ceremonies and the audience for the departing and arriving, I do not go to him." Then Reting told me, "I appointed [Gyambumgang](#) Trunyichemmo. Do you go to him." I said I know him. When the other watchmen[guards] were there, there was no chance to talk with Reting, so I would just tell him to confess well.

The meeting was held in the big hall above the three stairs. In this hall they had put a satin cushion. I went to the meeting when Reting was called for interrogation. He was asked questions for about an hour. He never accepted (admitted) anything. He said that he did not know anything. He said he was not aware of anything. Then I did not let him prostrate and I had no alternative but to hold him up from behind from his shawl. His water container covered with satin (tib. [chablug](#) [tib. chab blug]) had been removed.

They questioned him for a long time and they said that he is to blame for planning to overthrow the government and all that. But Reting kept on saying no (denying.) That was on the first day. Then they allowed him to sit down again for a long time. The senior most [Trunyichemmo](#) was the Talama. He spoke very softly. [Shakabpa](#) and the Nyendrön (aide in the Regent's secretariat) spoke very harshly.

Q

First they said something to him, and then he answered. Then he started prostrating and then he said nothing, right?

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A

He said he did not know anything. His golden Chablug with the piece of satin was not there. It was removed. It signified rank. So then he was upset. I told him not to get upset. Then Reting personally told me that the two senior [Trunyichemmo](#) were appointed by me, so you should talk to them. I said yes, but I didn't talk with them.

Q

Who were these two [Trunyichemmo](#)?

A

Talama and [Rampa](#). All of his (Reting) food was coming from Reting Labrang. I was instructed to eat and check the food first and then give it to him. They were afraid of being poisoned. I was made the supervisor, and two watchmen were appointed with very strong flashlights. So I went to check every night at around 1:30 or 3:30 a.m. But they became quite suspicious. So the Kashag called me one day. I met Lhalu on the staircase. He was smiling. [Rampa](#) was also sitting there. Then they said, you have done a very good job, but still there are lot of important things you should take care of because the monks may come to [Norbulinga](#) for this and that [reason].

Q

How many days did you stay there?

A

I don't remember the number of days properly.

Q

How many times was Reting taken to the meeting?

A

Only once.

Q

After that?

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A

After that, Reting went to the Assembly three times. I heard that there was gun shooting at Sera at that time. I was worried about this. Only the monk official nicknamed "Nepalese" (tib. pheypo [bal po] and the twisted mouth one (tib. porkyog [tib. spor kyog]) continued [to stay there]. Otherwise, after me, Thubten Nyimala was also changed.

Q

What we heard is that first Reting did not accept the charges, then when they said that they will show him the letters and they showed him the letters, then Reting accepted the charges.

A

In the first letter, Reting told them [his people] not to do that. It was like the proverb, "Even if the stupa turned upside down the layers will remain in the middle" [tib. mchod rten mgo mjug log kyang/ bang rim sked par gnas]. In the final letter, he had said that whatever you want to do, do it quickly and finish it whether the result would be good or bad [tib. bzang thag ngan thag chod pa]. I am going to the local place [tib. sa gnas] [Reting monastery] because it is difficult for the small child.

Q

Did he accept the charges of the Assembly?

A

I heard that he confessed although I was not there.

Q

Did Khardo [tib. mkhar rdo] Rimpoche accept the charges of the Assembly?

A

I heard that he confessed. I didn't go to that meeting. The house manager [tib. khang gnyer] took him up to it. Jogtrej [tib. lcog bkras] was also investigated.

[Previously] Reting resigned and the Assembly requested him not to resign. But Reting said that he had to do prayers, etc., and that if you are looking for someone to substitute

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for me, he said that [Taktra](#) is the most suitable person with respect to age and everything else. Then they (the Assembly) said that in that case we hope you will come back again and carry on the duties. So those sort of talks were there. [Taktra](#) said that he is not capable and this and that, but finally [Taktra](#) accepted and said that he will carry on for a while and that after 3 years, you [Reting] may kindly come back and take over again.

Q

I read in some books that at that time some secretary in the Shögaà [tib. shod 'gags] [the Regent's Secretariat] did not like it [Reting returning to power].

A

That is possible, but not all the Shögaà members said it. A few might have said it. But it was not only in the Shögaà, but some people in the Tsegaà also did not like it. Because of mostly individual problems. I think Reting Rimpoche's thought of coming back was an illusion. He was childish. The moment you gain power, you make a lot of mistakes.

Q

Why didn't they like it?

A

Actually, Reting's thinking of coming back was an illusion. When people become powerful, they make many mistakes.

Q

What position did [Taktra](#) appoint you?

A

Taktra appointed me as the head of the Payroll Office (tib. phogang [phogs khang]) although I did not ask for it. Later I was appointed as the [Laja](#). Actually I was the second candidate on the list. Normally, when people were appointed as the head of the Payroll Office, they gave little gifts. So I gave a little gift to [Taktra](#), but he returned it. The Chandzö [of Reting] was very bad, but the lama was okay. Sera monks never liked him.